THE BOYS™

PROPER PREPERATION AND PLANNING PART ONE

BY
GARTH ENNIS

WITH
RUSS BRAUN

AND
TONY AVIÑA

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MATURE READERS

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2010

Garth Ennis Darick Robertson

The BOYS™

FORTY-EIGHT

In a world where costumed heroes soar through the sky and masked vigilantes prowl the night, someone's got to make sure the "supes" don't get out of line. And someone will.

Billy Butcher, Wee Hughie, Mother's Milk, The Frenchman and The Female are The Boys: a CIA-backed team of very dangerous people, each one dedicated to the struggle against the most lethal force on Earth- superpower. Some superheroes have to be watched. Some have to be controlled. And some of them- sometimes- need to be taken out of the picture.

That's when you call in **The Boys**.

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PROPER PREPARATION AND PLANNING

part one

AVEC THE LAMPLIGHTER? ET COLONEL MALLORY'S GRANDAUGHTERS?

NO, THAT WAS THE END RESULT. I'M TALKIN' ABOUT THE WHOLE THING, WHY WHAT HAPPENED HAPPENED.

FROM THE MOMENT RAYNER GAVE US THE ORDER 'TIL WE WALKED INTO THAT HANGAR. SAW WHAT WAS LEFT O' THE DELTA LADS.

HOW DID WE BUGGER IT UP?

WE GOT...LAZY.

YEAH?

SUPES WE HIT UP 'TIL THEN WEREN'T SHIT.

I MEAN THEY GOT THE POWER, BUT IT'S KINDA LIKE FIGHTIN' A JUNKIE WIT' A SHOTGUN. TIME HE FIGURES OUT THE SAFETY, YOU TAKEN IT OFF HIM AN' BUST IT OVER HIS HEAD.

BUT THE SEVEN...

C'EST VRAI.

NOUS SOMMES DES SOLDATS. LES SUPES HAVE NO TRAINING.

BUT AT A CERTAIN LEVEL THAT ADVANTAGE DISAPPEARS. FIGHTING THE SEVEN IS LIKE MAKING WAR ON THE SUN.

I GUESS WE OUGHTA BE EXACT 'BOUT THIS: IT AIN'T SO MUCH THE SEVEN. IT'S THE HOMELANDER, MAEVE AN' BLACK NOIR, THE OTHER FOUR WERE NEVER IN THEIR LEAGUE.

STILL AIN'T.

AH, LAIT DE LA MERE. GOOD POINT.

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT THE HOMELANDER...

WE KNOW WHAT HE IS PLANNING, MORE OR LESS. WHAT HE HAS AGREED TO DO FOR VOUGHT. ALL OF WHICH SUGGESTS THAT HE IS...CAREFUL?

IN EXECUTION OF THESE PLANS, HE SHOWS DISCRETION. PATIENCE. SENSE. YET WE KNOW THE THINGS HE'S DONE, WE'VE SEEN THE PICTURES.

WE EACH OF US KNOW ALL TOO WELL WHAT LURKS INSIDE THAT MIND.

SO: HOW DOES SUCH A DEVIL LEARN RESTRAINT?

WE ALREADY KNOW HE'S FUCKIN' PSYCHOTIC, IT AIN'T A REAL STRETCH TO SAY HE'S GOT SOME BIPOLAR SHIT GOIN' ON TOO...

ONE DOES NOT ALWAYS FOLLOW FROM THE OTHER. BUT IF IT HAS, SHOULD WE NOT KNOW FOR SURE?

HUH.

YEAH, GOOD POINT, FRENCHIE. YOU LOOK INTO THAT ONE?

SURE.

SEVEN TAPES, WHAT WE KNOW OF THE TOSSER'S HISTORY, ALL THAT. GO BACK OVER THE LOT OF IT, SEE IF THERE'S SOMETHIN' WE MISSED.

GOT IT.

YOU WANNA DO SOMETHIN' FOR ME?

EH?

QUIT THROWIN' GODDAMN DARTS AT THE WALL. PLACE IS A HISTORIC BUILDIN', THEY DON'T COME MORE HISTORIC THAN THIS.

YOU SAID IT WAS A TIP...!

THE DAY WE MOVED IN HERE, THE FIRST THING YOU SAID WAS IT'S A CLASSIC ON THE OUTSIDE AN' A NIGHTMARE ON THE INSIDE. SO WHAT THE FUCK--

THAT AIN'T NO REASON TO MAKE IT WORSE.

WC

RIGHT, WELL, I'LL GO AN' BUY MESELF A DARTBOARD THEN. BLOODY HELL.

THANKS, MATE, JUST LIKE OLD TIMES...

IT IS?

HUGHIE RUNNIN' KINDA LATE, DON'T YOU THINK?

FRENCHIE...

ANOTHER MOMENT, M'SIEU CHARCUTER?

YEAH. BUY HER AN ICE CREAM OR SOMETHIN', WILL YOU?

HHHH.

MS. BRADLEY, WE MEET AT LAST. AN ABSOLUTE PLEASURE.

THANK YOU...

PLEASANT FLIGHT, I HOPE?

AH, YES. SHORT.

OF COURSE. I UNDERSTAND WE'RE GOING TO BE WORKING QUITE CLOSELY TOGETHER; I DO HOPE I'LL HAVE A CHANCE TO GET TO KNOW YOU BETTER.

AND HOW ARE *YOU*, SIR...?

VERY WELL, THANK YOU.

WHAT ARE WE DOING DOWN HERE?

WHAT'S *HE* DOING, COME TO THAT?

NOT SURE.

KIND OF...GETTING ON THE TEAM?

WHAT'S GOING ON OVER THERE?

FLYING LESSON.

HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO FLY HIS... NOIR-PLANE?

A DETAIL. STILL NO WORD OF STARLIGHT?

NO, SHE SEEMS TO HAVE EXTENDED HER LEAVE OF ABSENCE...

I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT. I'D HOPED TO BE KEPT INFORMED.

YOU'RE QUITE RIGHT. IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN, I ASSURE YOU.

ON A HAPPIER NOTE, I CAN TELL YOU THAT EVERYTHING WENT WELL WITH THE N.Y.P.D. VISIT.

GLAD TO HEAR IT.

YES, I TOLD THEM I LEFT THE MULLERS AT THE ENTRANCE TO I-87. I CALLED FOR AN UPDATE, BUT NO ONE'S HEARD A THING.

DO THE POLICE SUSPECT, UH...?

ALL I KNOW IS THAT THE FAMILY'S BEEN LISTED AS MISSING PERSONS. I'M STARTING TO FEAR THE WORST.

LOOK, I REALLY AM SORRY YOU'RE UPSET ABOUT STARLIGHT. LET ME CHECK TO SEE IF SHE'S EMAILED, THEN I'LL MEET YOU IN THE LOUNGE.

OKAY?

GET A BLACKBERRY...

HE'S BEING HELPFUL. NO, IT ISN'T TYPICAL, AND NO, NEITHER WAS THE CHARM OFFENSIVE.

HUH.

IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW HE ACTS, ALL I CAN THINK ABOUT ARE THOSE DAMN PHOTOS. I MEAN I'M DOING MY BEST NOT TO SHOW ANYTHING--

YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME, THEN. HE CAN HEAR YOUR HEARTBEAT.

HE CAN HEAR THE NEURONS FIRING IN YOUR BRAIN.

OH, OF COURSE...

ARE YOU ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN THAT YOU WANT TO WORK IN SUPERHUMAN DEVELOPMENT? BECAUSE IF YOU'RE NOT, THIS IS THE TIME TO TELL ME.

NO, NO, THAT'S NOT THE IDEA I WANTED TO GIVE YOU. I'M SORRY, I WAS MERELY REMARKING ON AN IMPRESSION, NO MORE THAN THAT.

I'M ONE HUNDRED PERCENT COMMITTED. YOU CAN RELY ON ME.

GLAD TO HEAR IT.

HERE'S ANOTHER SPECIAL LITTLE TREAT FOR YOU.

YOU GOT SOMETHIN' YOU WANNA--

OH, ACT YER AGE, FOR FUCK'S SAKE.

I DUNNO WHAT PISSES ME OFF THE MOST. THE FACT YOU'RE DOIN' THIS, OR THE WAY YOU'RE GOIN' ABOUT IT.

ALL THIS SARCASTIC BOLLOCKS, LIKE ONE O' THESE CUNTS ON THE FUCKIN' INTERNET: TELL ME SOMETHIN', WILL YOU?

SINCE WHEN IS *THAT* YOU?

HUGHIE'S GONNA BE BACK. MALCHEMICAL WAS A COCK-UP, IT WAS MY MISTAKE, BUT IT AIN'T THE REASON HE WENT WALKABOUT.

THAT WAS THIS SLAPPER, WHOEVER SHE WAS. I DUNNO WHAT SPLIT 'EM UP AN' I KNOW HE WASN'T SAYIN', BUT WHATEVER IT WAS HE'S GONNA GET OVER IT.

THEN HE'LL COME HOME.

AN' LISTEN, ONE LAST BLEEDIN' TIME: *I-DID-NOT-NICK-THAT-FUCKIN'-FLASK-OF-YOURS.*

SO ARE YOU GONNA BE ALL RIGHT WITH THIS, OR WHAT?

...SHIT...

WE SORTED, THEN?

MM.

MAGIC. AN' LOOK, FOR FUTURE REFERENCE, IF YOU DO HAVE SOME SORT O' PROBLEM: NOT IN FRONT O' THE NUTTERS, EH?

MM.

I GOT A PRACTICAL QUESTION.

SHOOT.

YOU SAID BEFORE WE HAVE ANOTHER GO. THAT REALLY WHAT WE DOIN'?

I DON'T SEE HOW WE CAN'T.

FRENCHIE HEARD THE HOMELANDER TALKIN' ABOUT BACKIN' VOUGHT. WE KNOW WHAT FOR: USIN' THE LADS THEY GOT IN THE WHITE HOUSE TO REPLACE DAKOTA BOB WITH VIC. POINT O' WHICH IS SUPES IN THE--IS SUPES ***BECOMIN'*** THE MILITARY.

A SUPE COUP, JESUS CHRIST, BLOODY RIGHT WE'RE HAVIN' A GO...

FRENCHIE SAID HE SAW A MAJOR FUCKIN' POW-WOW GOIN' ON UP ABOVE BELIEVE. THESE ARE SERIOUS NUMBERS WE TALKIN' HERE.

SEVEN'RE THE KEY. WE NOBBLE THE BIG BOYS, THE OTHER CUNTS'LL JUST FALL APART.

AN' THIS IS THE TIME TO DO IT, WHEN WE A MAN DOWN?

YEAH, WELL IT DON'T LOOK LIKE WE GOT MUCH CHOICE. YOU SAW HUGHIE BEFORE HE FUCKED OFF, DID YOU TRY AN' GET HIM TO STAY?

NO...

I JUST REMEMBER LAST TIME. I MEAN GOIN' UP AGAINST THESE MUTHAFUCKAS--I AIN'T SCAREDA DYIN', FUCK THAT, BUT THE SHIT THEY GOT IT'LL BE DONE IN GODDAMN SECONDS.

ALL GONNA BE FOR NOTHIN', KNOWUMSAYIN'?

THAT'D BE ONE TO AVOID, ALL RIGHT. WHICH IS WHY I WANNA GO OVER THE--

HELLO...!

MONKEY?

I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND ME SHOWING MYSELF IN...

WHAT THE FUCK'RE YOU DOIN' HERE?

AN' WHY THE FUCK'RE YOU SMILIN'...?

DON'T WORRY, SHE CALLS EVERYONE THAT! QUITE A CHARACTER, OUR MAEVE!

I DO HOPE YOU'VE ENJOYED YOUR VISIT TODAY, IF THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE YOU NEED PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO ASK...

OKAY, YOU'VE GOT POWER! NOW YOU NEED TO BRING UP THE ENGINES!

ONCE YOU'VE DONE THAT, YOU'RE GOING TO SET THE THROTTLE TO IDLE AND LOCK THE WHEELS! THEN YOU'RE GOING TO SET THE THRUST VECTOR TO NINETY DEGREES, JUST LIKE I SHOWED YOU!

THEN--AND ONLY THEN--YOU'LL OPEN THE THROTTLE AND LEVEL OFF AT ABOUT, LET'S SAY FIVE FEET, OKAY?

OKAY? YOU GETTING ALL THIS?

ARE YOU GETTING ANY OF IT...?

IS HE ALL RIGHT?

UH...THAT'S KIND OF THE MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION.

I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH HIM FOR THREE DAYS, AND I'VE NO IDEA IF HE'S TAKEN IN A WORD I'VE SAID...

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU--

NO!

OH, JESUS FUCKING CHRIST--!

BLACK NOIR, STOP, STOP! DON'T TRY AND TAKE OFF, YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING!

THIS IS UN--

COULD SOMEBODY HELP ME?

PLEASE?

...JESUS.

THIS IS JUST WHAT WE FUCKING NEED.

WELL, THERE GOES MY BLOODY DAY, ANYWAY.

HEH HEH HEHNN...

OI! WHO TOLD YOU YOU COULD SIT DOWN?

DIRECTOR RAYNER HAS ANNOUNCED HER INTENTION TO RESIGN HER POSITION, EFFECTIVE ONE MONTH FROM TODAY.

YOU WHAT?

THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE HAS CONTACTED HER REGARDING A SENATE SEAT IN HER HOME STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS. SHE FEELS THE TIME HAS COME TO SERVE HER COUNTRY IN NEW--

FUCK OFF...!

RAYNER CAN'T GO INTO POLITICS, SHE'S GOT MORE SHIT ON HER THAN ELTON JOHN'S COCK! SHE'S LUCKY SHE AIN'T UP FOR WAR CRIMES AFTER THAT CARRY-ON IN AFGHANISTAN!

PULL THE OTHER ONE, MONKEY, IT'S GOT FUCKIN' BELLS ON...!

OBVIOUSLY SHE THINKS OTHERWISE. SO DO THE PEOPLE ALREADY PLANNING HER FIRST CAMPAIGN. WATCH C.N.N. IN FOUR WEEKS TIME, THEN YOU'LL SEE WHO'S PULLING WHAT...

BOLLOCKS. BUT IF SHE EVER DOES HAVE A GO, ANYONE TRYNNA WHITEWASH THE BITCH IS IN FOR A BIG SURPRISE.

ALL RIGHT, I'LL PLAY ALONG. WHO'S GONNA BE TAKIN' OVER WHEN SHE--

...NO.

SHE WOULDN'T.

SHE JUST--

SHE

OH, FUCK.

HEH HEH HEH HEH HEHHNN...!

IT'S ONLY A CARETAKER POSITION, OF COURSE, THEY'RE ALREADY LOOKING AT A NUMBER OF CANDIDATES TO TAKE OVER ON A PERMANENT BASIS. BUT DIRECTOR RAYNER FEELS THAT IF I APPLY MYSELF--WELL, WHO KNOWS WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN?

TO THAT END, I'VE DECIDED TO MAKE AS EARLY A START AS POSSIBLE...

WITH YOU. NOT TO PUT TOO FINE A POINT ON IT.

UPON REVIEWING YOUR RECENT RECORDS, I'VE NOTICED THAT YOU DON'T REALLY SEEM TO HAVE SUBMITTED ANY. OR NOT ENOUGH TO FORM A COHERENT PICTURE, ANYWAY.

I'M SEEING PLENTY OF EXPENSES *CLAIMS,* OF COURSE. THE OCCASIONAL AFTER-ACTION REPORT. WHAT I'M NOT SEEING--AT ALL--

ARE YOUR *ACCOUNTS...*

MUTHAFUCKA.

LARGE SUMS OF MONEY REGULARLY GO OUT--ON THE BASIS OF SOMEWHAT SCANT JUSTIFICATION FROM YOUR END. WITH THAT IN MIND, I'VE DRAFTED THESE ***CLAIMS FORMS*** FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS: SIMPLE, CLEAR, EASY TO READ AND USE, AND THOROUGHLY COMPREHENSIVE.

SO COMPREHENSIVE, IN FACT, THAT I'D ALSO LIKE TO SEE ***BACKDATED*** FORMS FOR ALL OF YOUR ACTIVITIES SINCE--

MONKEY.

ALL BULLSHIT ASIDE.

YOU AIN'T TOO PLEASED WITH THE PAPERWORK UP 'TIL NOW, FAIR ENOUGH. BUT I GUARANTEE YOU'RE GONNA WANNA READ THE NEXT BIT.

DIRECTOR KESSLER.

W--

DIRECTOR KESSLER.

Y--

DIRECTOR KESSLER.

NO?

CAN'T MANAGE IT?

NOT EVEN A LITTLE ONE?

WELL, I'LL LEAVE YOU TO WORK ON THAT. AND ON THESE, OF COURSE.

I HAVE A TRAIN TO CATCH.

...I AM A BROKEN FUCKIN' MAN.

BE STRONG.

HE'S STRONG SO YOU'RE STRONG.

ONLY WAY.

JESUS.

THAT WOULD CERTAINLY BE A START.

YES, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I MEAN. EVERYONE INVOLVED. EVERY NAME ON EVERY SIGN-OFF.

PLEASE DO.

SO...?

THE AIRCRAFT WAS BOUGHT SURPLUS BY RED RIVER, AFTER SEEING SERVICE IN PAKISTAN. RECONDITIONED, JUST LIKE THE ONE BEFORE IT.

UNFORTUNATELY--INCREDIBLY--NO ONE THOUGHT TO CHECK THE CANNON ARMAMENT. WHICH STILL CONTAINED LIVE AMMUNITION FROM OPERATIONS FLOWN IN COMBAT.

BUT IF IT WAS RECONDITIONED...

IT WAS REFUELLED. I SUSPECT THAT ANYTHING ELSE WOULD HAVE BEEN A BONUS.

I'VE ORDERED ANOTHER, AS WELL AS A REPLACEMENT INSTRUCTOR.

HOPEFULLY SOMEONE WHO CAN ACTUALLY DO THE JOB...

YOU REALLY THINK IT WAS HIS FAULT?

DON'T YOU?

HOW IS ANYONE SUPPOSED TO EXPLAIN PILOTING A COMPLEX FIGHTER JET TO ***BLACK NOIR?*** AND IF HE TAKES IT INTO HIS HEAD TO START SCRABBLING AROUND AND PRESSING WHATEVER SWITCHES HE LIKES THE LOOK OF, WHO'S GOING TO STOP HIM?

ARMED OR UNARMED, A PLANE LIKE THAT IS POTENTIALLY LETHAL. I DON'T KNOW WHY WE WANT TO LET HIM LOOSE WITH IT IN THE FIRST PLACE.

YOU'VE READ THE SAME P.R. REQUESTS THAT I HAVE. AND VICTORY ARE ALWAYS PUSHING FOR IT; EVERY TIME HE FLIES INTO SOME EVENT ON THE DEEP'S BACK, THEY HAVE TO FIELD INNUMERATE QUERIES ABOUT THE PLANE IN THE COMICS.

THERE'S MERCHANDISING, THERE'S THE SUPERPOWER-IN-DEFENSE ANGLE...

WHICH I HOPE WILL YIELD APPROPRIATE DIVIDENDS. OTHERWISE IT'S A LOT OF EXPENSE TO SATISFY THE NEAT AND TIDY MINDS OF GEEKS.

AND ALL OF THIS ASSUMES THAT--

UM...

IF I'M... EXCEEDING MY...

GO ON.

YOU MAY AS WELL.

WELL...WE'RE ASSUMING THAT IT CAN ACTUALLY BE DONE. THAT HE CAN BE TAUGHT TO FLY.

THROWING MONEY AT A PROBLEM ISN'T LIKE A MAGIC SPELL. THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT SIMPLY CAN'T BE MADE TO WORK.

HMMM.

I AGREE. COMPLETELY, AS A MATTER OF FACT.

WHEN WE GET BACK, CONTACT RED RIVER AND CANCEL MY REQUEST FOR BOTH AIRCRAFT AND PILOT.

VERY GOOD.

AFTER YOU, MS. BRADLEY.

I HAVE BEEN THINKING.

JEN & BERRIES

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I WONDER IF YOU AND I SHOULD GO AWAY QUITE SOON.

SOMETIMES I FEAR THE BOYS ARE ON A PATH THAT...

WELL.

WHEREVER THEY GO, THE LIFE IS BAD FOR YOU. SUPES OR GANGSTERS, THE NATURE OF THE TARGET DOES NOT MATTER: TO INDULGE THE FURY IN YOUR HEART IS BAD FOR YOU.

YOU ARE A HUMAN BEING, NOT A WEAPON. AND YOU ARE NOT RESPECTED AS YOU SHOULD BE.

NOR AM I.

WE SHOULD GO AWAY. SOMEWHERE FAR AND HONEST, UNDER THE SKY. AND IF THAT NEED ARISES IN YOU...

THERE IS ME.

I AM STRONG. PERHAPS I CAN ENDURE, THAT OTHERS DO NOT SUFFER.

THAT ONE DAY--WHO CAN TELL? THE STORM MIGHT PASS FOR GOOD.

NO?

NO.

MERCI, MAM'SELLE.

MERCI.

next: KING OF HELL